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Conveniently Bad Timing

The cost of passing this nonbinding resolution is far greater than its benefits.

By Jeb Hensarling

This week, the antiwar faction of the Democrat Congress reached a new low in their effort to put forth controversial legislation that further complicates our military efforts in Iraq and could have potentially devastating effects on the men and women of our military.

Once again, Speaker Nancy Pelosi has come down with a case of conveniently bad timing. Last week, the House Foreign Affairs Committee dug 80 years into history and passed a non-binding resolution that condemned what is now the nation of Turkey (at the time, the Ottoman Empire) for genocide for the mass killings of Armenians. The Turkish ambassador to the U.S., Nabi Sensory, was immediately recalled to Ankar for “consultations” — not exactly a minor diplomatic maneuver, rather a giant warning flare.

The ins and outs of successful diplomacy are extremely complicated, and to be successful, a nation must never take its eye off of the big picture. We are a nation at war, and right now America’s big picture is the safety of our citizens and the men and women serving abroad. Turkey has been a key ally during the War on Terror, and has helped our cause by facilitating critical supply routes into Iraq and Afghanistan. We rely heavily on Incirlik, an air-force base located near the Iraqi-Turkish border, as a gateway into Iraq. Access to this base is the closest and most efficient means of shipping supplies to Iraq. Currently, nearly 70 percent of all air cargo supplies for American forces in Iraq go through Turkey, including 95 percent of the mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles that shield American troops from harm.

Make no mistake, by condemning a strategic ally for crimes that were committed early in the last century, the Democrat Congress jeopardizes our relations with a key ally during a time of War. We need not look back far into history to see the ramifications of such action. Last year, Turkey broke all military ties with France after its parliament passed legislation that made the denial of Armenian genocide a crime. Similar action today by the Turks would threaten the wellbeing of our soldiers in the region and greatly undercut American efforts in Iraq.

If public opinion serves as an indicator, we should expect the Turkish government to respond in similar fashion. According to the first nationwide survey conducted in Turkey (conducted by [Terror Free Tomorrow](#)), 78 percent of Turks oppose the congressional resolution, and nearly 75 percent say that House passage of the Armenian resolution will worsen their opinion of the United States. That’s not all. Perhaps most telling of all is that nearly 80 percent of Turks would support a “strong response” by their government if this resolution is passed by Congress — including suspension of diplomatic relations with the United States.

With all of these realities before us, it is perplexing to understand why Democrat leaders continue

to push for the immediate consideration of this nonbinding resolution. There is no question that a great human tragedy occurred last century in what is now Turkey, and an accurate history should be written. But first, we should note that no one responsible is alive today. Second, we should question whether now is the time for Members of Congress to assume the role of historians. Responsible members of Congress have one question to consider: Is passing a nonbinding resolution (meaning, it simply expresses the opinion of Congress) worth risking American access to key supply routes into Iraq, and destabilizing the Kurdish portions of that nation?

It seems clear that the cost of passing this nonbinding resolution is far greater than its benefits. We are a nation at war, and our first concern must always be the brave men and women of our armed forces, who I believe are done a great disservice by this symbolic House vote. This is just the latest example of anti-War-on-Terror Democrats in the House being either oblivious or indifferent to the welfare of American forces serving in harm's way.

Is it appropriate for Congress to act so irresponsibly that it would purposely consider legislation which could cause direct harm to the men and women of our armed forces? This is the question that Speaker Pelosi must consider; while the resolution that will be brought to the floor will be largely symbolic, its repercussions most certainly will not be.

— *Congressman Jeb Hensarling is chairman of the **Republican Study Committee**, a group of over 100 conservative Republicans in the House of Representatives.*

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